

---

National Institute for Occupational  
Safety and Health  
Robert A. Taft Laboratories  
4676 Columbia Parkway  
Cincinnati OH 45226-1998

June 20, 2003  
HETA 2003-0199

Jill S. Lozis  
Headquarters, West Tower  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, TSA-17  
400 7<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Ms. Lozis:

On March 19, 2003, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) received a confidential health hazard evaluation (HHE) request. The request was from employees working as Transportation Security Administration (TSA) baggage checkers at the Baltimore Washington International airport (BWI) in Baltimore, Maryland. The request mentioned concerns about potential exposure to X-rays, diesel exhaust, noise, dusty working conditions, and hazardous items found in baggage. The request also mentioned that employees were reportedly experiencing health problems including skin and eye irritation, sore throats, and headaches, and that there was a perceived lack of eyewash stations, safety showers, and respiratory protection. This letter summarizes our discussions regarding the HHE request.

To date, NIOSH has received three requests, all similar in nature, from TSA employees working at different U.S. airports. As we discussed, John Cardarelli, PhD, a NIOSH health physicist, will be evaluating the X-ray baggage inspection systems at various U. S. airports, including BWI, within the next year.

After our initial discussion concerning this request, you conducted a site visit at the BWI facility (on May 29, 2003) which included a walkthrough of work zones 1, 2, and 3 (those mentioned in the request). You mentioned that you spoke to some employees at length, but none reported having any current health concerns. You also found that exposure to hazardous items in baggage was limited because employee regulations require baggage checkers to wear protective gloves for all inspections and to contact their supervisors before touching anything that appears hazardous inside the baggage. Therefore, you concluded that you do not see a need for more eyewash stations, emergency showers, or a respiratory protection program. During a discussion with representatives of the airport's operations department, you found that noise and ventilation surveys of zones 1-3 had been completed in the recent past. You mentioned that you plan to obtain copies of those surveys and to conduct further site evaluations at BWI and that you are in contact with Dr. Cardarelli to facilitate his evaluation of the X-ray baggage inspection systems.

Even though none of the employees you spoke with reported health symptoms on the day of your site visit, the non-specific health symptoms mentioned in the request can result from poor indoor environmental quality (IEQ) in the work environment and may come and go with environmental variations. Therefore, I am enclosing a copy of a document produced through the joint efforts of NIOSH and the Environmental Protection Agency. This document, *Building Air Quality, A Guide for Building Owners and Facility Managers*, contains written guidance on preventing, identifying, and correcting indoor environmental quality problems. I encourage you to use the information in this document to improve the quality of the work environment at BWI.

The IEQ issues in this HHE request are being addressed by you, and Dr. Cardarelli will be evaluating the X-ray baggage inspection system under a separate HHE number. Therefore, this letter will serve as the final report of this HHE. We request that to comply with NIOSH regulations regarding informing employees of this HHE (CFR Title 42, Part 85, Section 85.11), this letter be posted in a prominent place accessible to all employees for a period of at least 30 calendar days. If you have any questions, please contact me at (513) 841-4206.

Sincerely yours,

Ann M. Krake, MS, REHS  
Industrial Hygienist  
Industrial Hygiene Section  
Hazard Evaluations and Technical  
Assistance Branch  
Division of Surveillance, Hazard  
Evaluations and Field Studies

Enclosure

cc: Confidential requesters

**Page 3 – Ms. Jill Lozis**

bcc:

HETA 2003-0199 (close-out)

A. Krake

T. Seitz

J. Cardarelli

Keywords: Baggage handlers, baggage checkers, airport, X-rays, diesel exhaust, dirt, dust, baggage hazards.

SIC Code: 4581. Airports, flying fields, and airport terminal services.

Determination: Undetermined